

March 9, 2023

To the CGA Planning and Development Committee,

We are very much opposed to SB1141 and SB985, which are being considered by this committee for movement to the General Assembly.

It is not clear to us that implementing policies that will force large numbers of middle- and upper-class citizens to leave Connecticut, along with associated high value industries, thus depleting the state tax base, would be of benefit to the state of Connecticut. We ask that you not send either SB1141 or SB985 to the full General Assembly.

These bills, especially SB1141, would place onerous burdens on towns in Connecticut, by placing top down, one size fits all policies on towns without regard to individual towns' situations!

We would be adversely affected by SB1141, as our home has been designated as being within the ½ mile radius of Bethel's Transit Oriented Development overlay, which was put in place without notification to residents such as ourselves who now are in this zone. The definition of Bethel's TOD radius is dubious, as it is ½ mile "as the crow flies", but in reality, we are over a mile from the train station.

SB1141 is especially heinous, as it would allow As Of Right over-development by predatory developers, who have no other connection to our town but that of making money at our townspeople's expense, by hiding behind bills such as this one!

This bill would take away our right as citizens of our towns to speak out about proposed development, by doing away with public hearings, transparency, and public participation for developments such as these. Silencing the townspeople who would be adversely affected by developments such as these is very undemocratic and smacks of totalitarianism.

Our town of Bethel is a lovely, charming suburban town in which our residents have chosen to settle, and where we have invested our life savings and our energies in purchasing our homes and taking part in our town's day to day life. This bill would essentially turn our downtown area within the TOD into a mini-city with high rises in the TOD area. This is not something that the state should be mandating on towns!

Ironically, there is a current proposal on the table here in Bethel now, which, if approved as intended (230+ high-rise apartments within the TOD), would destroy Bethel's most racially diverse neighborhood of single family homes!

This bill does not consider the infrastructure capacity of towns - for example, our town of Bethel has already been victim to multi-unit apartment developments which are putting extreme stress on our police and fire departments, our school system, and our traffic throughout our town. There will also be extreme pressure placed on our water and sewer capacity with development such as this bill proposes. All of these items will place an extremely unfair local property tax burden on the residents of Bethel and other towns, with no compensation or support from state government!

The proposed set aside for affordable housing under this bill would not make housing more affordable in Connecticut, but again would benefit the developers who have no other connection to the towns to which they bring these monstrously large high-density apartment complexes. **This sounds like block busting to us!!**

The 65 day limit for consideration of development applications proposed under this bill seems unreasonable, given the complexity of high-density apartment complexes, with the traffic and infrastructure issues that must be considered.

Although SB985 seems to be slightly better by allowing towns the option to opt in, and provides state funding to towns who are not designated as distressed cities, it still has a number of provisions that we oppose. It too proposes a short time limit for consideration of development applications. It does not really address providing affordable housing within the proposed bill. It also takes away the rights of towns to limit off-street parking. **We oppose SB985 as well.**

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Ronald and Julie Sorcek
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Bethel, CT